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RELEASED IN PART
B1, 1.4(D), B3, INA

E51

ACTION WHA-00

INFO LOG-00 AID-00 EUR-00 TEDE-00 IO-00 OIG-00 PM-00
P-00 DOHS-00 PMB-00 CARC-00 SAS-00 /000W
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P 231508Z JUN 06
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5220
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LISBON PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY MADRID PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY MEXICO PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY QUITO PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE PRIORITY
AMCONSUL CURACAO PRIORITY
AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL PRIORITY
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY
NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY
USINT HAVANA PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 001892

SIPDIS

HQSOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD
DEPT PASS TO AID/OTI RPORTER
COPENHAGEN FOR DLAWTON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/12/2016
TAGS: PGOV, KDEM, VE
SUBJECT: LONG KNIVES COME OUT FOR IMPEACHED TSJ JUSTICE

REF: A. CARACAS 01661
B. CARACAS 03387
C. CARACAS 01720

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: OSCAR J OLSON
CLASSIFICATION: CONFIDENTIAL REASON: 1.4(D)
DECLASSIFY AFTER: 12 JUN 2026
DATE/CASE ID: 25 FEB 2009 200705281

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Classified By: ACTING POLITICAL COUNSELOR MARK WELLS FOR REASON
1.4 (D)

Summary

1. (C) On June 8, the National Assembly unanimously voted to remove Supreme Court Justice Luis Velazquez Alvaray. Velazquez Alvaray did not attend the legislative hearing, as was his right, citing fears of persecution and arrest. [REDACTED]

B1, B3

[REDACTED] Fallout from the Velazquez Alvaray scandal has led to the death of an assistant (ruled suicide), the indictment of a lawyer with close ties to President Chavez and Vice President Rangel, and accusations of links to prosecutor Danilo Anderson's murder. End Summary.

You're Out!

2. (C) On June 8, amidst high security, the National Assembly (AN) unanimously voted to remove Supreme Court Justice Luis Velazquez Alvaray for alleged irregularities in the purchase of land for a judicial complex in the Petare area of Caracas (ref a). Velazquez Alvaray was invited to present his defense at the AN session, but did not attend, citing a lack of prior notification and fears that he would be arrested immediately after speaking in the Assembly. In a letter to the AN explaining his absence, Velazquez Alvaray reiterated his innocence and questioned the AN's objectivity, saying he refused to let the legislature serve "his head on a silver platter as an electoral trophy." At least 25 deputies--including Velazquez Alvaray ally and AN anti-corruption czar Pedro Carreno--did not attend the session (protesting BRV treatment of Velazquez Alvaray) and were replaced by alternates. Now that his judicial immunity has been revoked, the Attorney General's office was expected to indict Velazquez Alvaray on corruption charges, though after several days prosecutors had still taken no action.

[REDACTED] B1

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Fallout Ripples Through Judiciary

4. (U) Meanwhile, the Attorney General's office continues investigating Velazquez Alvaray's business dealings in Barinas and the purchase of land for other judicial complexes in Merida, Tachira, and Apure states that he oversaw. One suspect in the Barinas investigation, former Supreme Court Department of Administration (DEM) Secretary and Velazquez Alvaray aide Antonio Barazarte, allegedly killed himself June 8 shortly before the AN's decision. Press reports indicate Barazarte was about to be indicted for corruption.

5. (U) The Velazquez Alvaray incident has also triggered infighting among judges and prosecutors linked to the "Band of Midgets," which he alleged was an extortion ring that fixed sensitive cases for the BRV. In retaliation for his suspension, Velazquez Alvaray accused Caracas Circuit Court Judge Belkis Cedeno of belonging to this corrupt group. Cedeno, in turn, accused and ultimately secured the indictment of private lawyer Esther Bigott for attempting to bribe a judge involved in the Danilo Anderson murder investigation. Bigott is thought to be President Chavez' personal lawyer and has handled cases for Vice President Rangel.

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